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This is how Kimbal Musk is using shipping containers to inspire millennials

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Kimbal Musk, brother of Elon Musk, has created a company which uses shipping containers for urban farming.

Image: REUTERS/Fred Prouser

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Farmers are ageing fast. In the United States, for example, the average age of the person primarily responsible for the day-to-day running of a farm (principal operator) increased from 50 in 1982 to 58 in 2012.

Average Age of Principal Operator, 1982 - 2012

OUR IMPACT

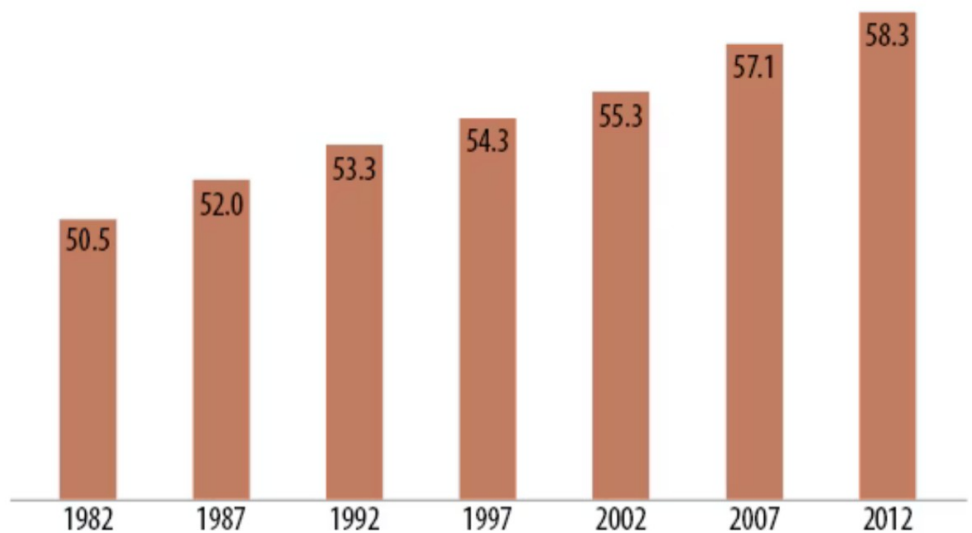
What's the World Economic Forum doing to **accelerate** action on Industries in Depth?



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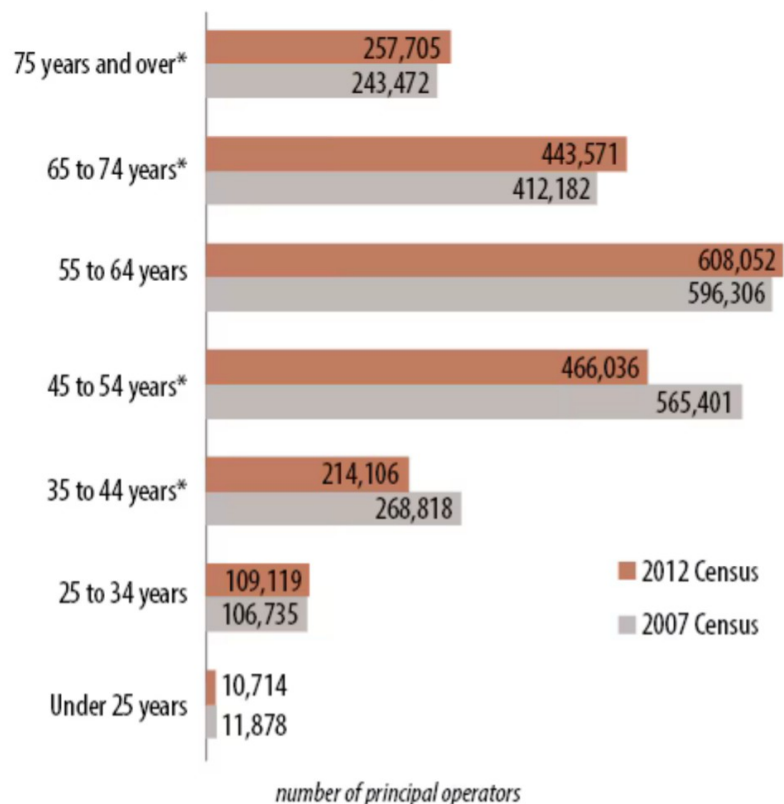
Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

Image: United States Department of Agriculture

Data compiled by the United States Department of Agriculture also shows the number of principal operators aged 55-64 increased from around 596,000 in 2007 to just over 608,000 in 2012.

Among those aged 25-34, roughly 109,000 were categorized as principal operators in 2012, the USDA finds. For those under the age of 25, this figure drops to just 10,714, which is down from 11,878 in 2007.

Principal Operators by Age Group, 2007 and 2012



Source: USDA NASS, 2012 Census of Agriculture.

**Statistically significant change.*

Image: United States Department of Agriculture

According to Kimbal Musk, brother of tech billionaire Elon Musk, farming isn't a career path many millennials have ever considered.

Speaking to the [World Economic Forum](#) about this issue last year, Musk vowed to get more young people interested in farming through Square Roots, a project he launched in 2016 alongside business partner Tobias Peggs.

Square Roots, which is located in Brooklyn, New York, provides space inside refurbished shipping containers for the next generation of farmers to grow produce.



Kimbal Musk (centre) alongside Square Roots students



Image: The Kitchen

Each container has the capacity to yield more than more 22kg of leafy greens each week and only needs about 30 litres of water per day, Square Roots says.

The company offers 10 young farmers at a time the chance to take part in a 13-month curriculum, which includes skills-based education, professional development plans, and experiential learning across four pillars: farming, business, community, and leadership.

4 Pillars of Real Food Entrepreneurship



Image: Square Roots

The aim, according to [a blog](#) on the company's website, is to empower people through the growth of "real food".

The blog says: "People want real, local food – food you can trust to nourish your body, the community, and the planet. And they want it all year round, grown in the cities where they live."

Urban farming

Growing food in this way – known as urban farming – is fast becoming a global phenomenon, and is common in many [developing countries](#).

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that 800 million people grow food in and amongst high-rises and on rooftops.

This revolutionary practice was also listed among the World Economic Forum's [Top 10 Urban Innovations](#) in 2015, with the report arguing that a simple way to reduce food waste was to move the farm to the consumer's doorstep.



Image: Facebook